

DEFENSE RELATIONS

SHARED STRATEGIC FUTURE

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he key word in the ever-expanding lexicon of the U.S.-India defense relationship is “inter-operability.” While it signifies the mutual desire of both countries to work more closely in the sphere of military cooperation, it also portrays a future in which the two countries share strategic doctrines and operations in order to tackle the challenges of a new century.

It was India’s swift response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S. and its unconditional support for the War on Terrorism that galvanized the change in U.S.-India military relations. However, the first steps had been taken months earlier, when India endorsed the National Missile Defense program unveiled by the Bush Administration in May 2001. The removal of sanctions against India in September 2001 helped the U.S. and India to identify mutually overlapping national security goals and give a new impetus to military ties.

The aim of the burgeoning bilateral defense ties is to develop capabilities and confidence, jointly confront multilateral security issues, such as the protection of energy supplies and sea lanes, conduct peacekeeping and combat terrorism. The military establishments of both countries have much to gain from strengthening this relationship. Clearly, the development of inter-operable procedures, communications and doctrines is only possible through familiarization, understanding and confidence building, focusing on areas of mutual interest and enhancing the professional development of personnel.

Consequently, fast-paced developments in military-to-military (“mil-to-mil”) relations have been the most visible aspect of the process of transforming the bilateral relationship. This is evident from the growing frequency of bilateral exercises, seminars, personnel exchanges, high-level and unit visits, officer and unit exchanges, as well as military technology sales and cooperation. The U.S. aim in giving this relationship a new thrust was clear when Admiral Dennis Blair (former Commander of the U.S.



TSGT. KEITH BROWN

Pacific Command) declared, “We believe that a robust U.S.-India defense relationship, of a kind that is unprecedented in our bilateral history, can play an important part in contributing to peace, security and freedom in Asia. We will develop our relationship with India on the basis of India’s emergence as a rising global power.”

Although the bedrock of the U.S.-India defense relationship is the Agreed Minute of Defense Relations of 1995, the scope of the relationship has gone way beyond what was envisaged at that time. Since then, the two militaries have started the serious business of working together, forging links in different aspects of military operations and doctrine. The objective is simple. The more the two countries exercise together, the

U.S.-India military relations have reached a new high, with all three wings of the military engaging in joint exercises and programs

JOINT EXERCISES

DEFENSE TIES GREW BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS

FEBRUARY 2001: Vice-Admiral Metzger, Commander of the U.S. 7th Fleet and guided missile cruiser *USS Cowpens*, represented the U.S. at India's first international fleet review in Mumbai.



OCTOBER 2001: Launch of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, which saw U.S. aircraft and ships being regularly refueled in India.

NOVEMBER 2001-2003: Fourteen U.S. Navy ships visited India, including two Aircraft Carrier Distinguished Days.

APRIL AND SEPTEMBER 2002: *INS Sukanya* and *INS Sharda* took over from the *USS Cowpens* to conduct patrols and escort U.S. ships through the Malacca Straits in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

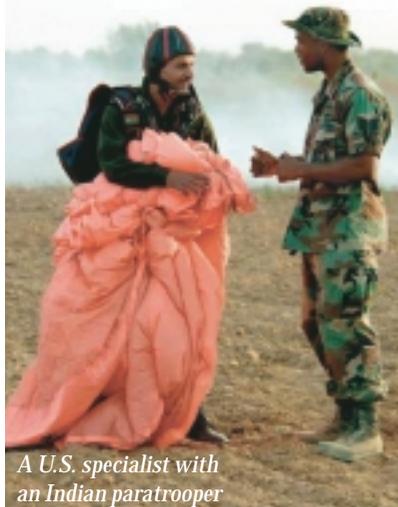
MAY 2002: U.S. and Indian Special Operations Forces conducted Balance Iroquois in Agra. Aimed at exchanging mutual expertise in special operations and airborne assault in day and nighttime conditions.

SEPTEMBER 2002: U.S. Army Alaska's 1st battalion 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment welcomed 80 soldiers from India's 50th Independent Parachute Brigade flying to Alaska in an IAF IL-76 to "Geronimo Thrust," first-ever live firing exercise.

greater their understanding of each other's systems and methodologies and the easier it will be for them to work together in real situations should and when the need arises. Apart from the professional development of personnel, the joint operations help mutual understanding of doctrines that, over the longer term, will help both armies work together for common strategic goals.

Another key element of the engagement process is the IMET (International Military Education and Training) program in which the U.S. sends Indian military personnel to U.S. military training courses. A barometer for the new and improved ties, the budget for this program climbed to Rs 4.6 crore (\$1 million) in 2002, allowing 37 Indian officers to attend training courses at military facilities in the U.S. In 2004, the budget is expected to increase to Rs 5.5 crore (\$1.2 million). In addition, Indian and American officers participated in a record number of 53

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A U.S. specialist with an Indian paratrooper

military-related conferences in the period 2002-2003.

All three military services are engaging in ever broadening military exercises, many of which have ever-increasing joint inter-service aspects. During exercises in Agra in 2002, Indian and American Special Forces paratroopers jumped from Indian and U.S. Air Force aircraft to learn about each other's formation flying techniques and to coordinate

dropping ground support cargo.

It was in the searing heat of a May Day in Agra that the IAF and USAF set out on a journey of inter-operability. USAF Airman First Class Mitul Patel from the 353rd Special Operations Group was deployed from the U.S. air base in Kadena, Okinawa, to Indian Air Force Station in Agra, to take part in the largest-ever combined/joint airborne exercise between the U.S. and India. This 23-year-old, Gujarat-born Indian American crew chief was responsible for launching MC-130s in the exercise with the IAF.

Meanwhile, during Operation Enduring Freedom in April 2002, Indian Navy ships *Sharda* and *Sukanya* relieved *USS Cowpens* to escort ships in the Straits of Malacca and protect them against terrorist attacks



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and pirates on the high seas. *USS Cowpens'* Commanding Officer, Captain Paul S. Holmes, said that working with the Indian Navy rekindled a friendship. Just 14 months earlier, in February 2001, the *USS Cowpens* had represented the U.S. in the International Fleet Review in Mumbai. While there, *Cowpens* delivered Rs 36 lakh (\$80,000) worth of relief supplies for Gujarat, which had recently been devastated by an earthquake. As Captain Holmes summed up, "During an interview at the end of the Fleet Review, I was asked what would come of U.S.-India relations as a result of the Fleet Review. I said we would have to wait and see what would develop from the seeds of friendship that we had planted. Who could have foreseen that 14 months later an Indian Navy ship would relieve a U.S. Navy ship in a real world operation, and that the U.S. Navy ship would be the *Cowpens*."

In the past couple of years, both navies have conducted several joint search and rescue exercises as well as the "Malabar" exercise in the Arabian Sea, both of which are now an annual activity. The operations involve ships and helicopters of both countries intercepting suspicious vessels, using anti-submarine warfare and completing complicated flying operations. Testing mettle and capabilities, these exercises give a

Special Forces joint training sessions under way in Agra in 2003

India's
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window into how each navy operates. In the first exercise in October 2002, the Indian Navy's western fleet fielded the Delhi-class destroyer *INS Delhi*, Godavari-class frigate *INS Gomati* and Shishumar-class submarine *INS Shankul* and tanker *Aditya* against the U.S. Navy's *USS Chancellorsville*, a Ticonderoga-class guided missile cruiser, and *USS Paul F. Foster*, a Spruance-class destroyer. In addition, maritime reconnaissance aircraft of both navies took part in this, the largest-ever U.S.-India military exercise, held in 2002 and again in 2003.

In February 2004, for the first time since 1963, fighter aircraft joined the fray. Eight F-15C aircraft from the 19th Fighter Squadron, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska flew to Indian Air Force Station, Gwalior, to participate in a dissimilar air combat training (DACT) exercise. The Indian Air Force fielded Jaguars, MiG 21 Bison, Mirage 2000s and Su-30 K aircraft. In another first, India will make the largest strategic deployment of its combat aircraft outside its territory in the summer of 2004, when it will participate in the multinational Cope Thunder 2004 in Alaska.

Special Forces operations are often the stuff of classified information, but they also showcase the cutting edge of inter-operability, especially as both armies gear up to tackle terrorists and guerrilla and clandestine warfare. Over the past few years, joint exercises in this area have included heliborne operations, counter-terrorism training, mountain warfare, close-quarter combat and jungle warfare.

COL. STEVEN SBOTO



An Indian soldier with a U.S. officer in Phainuam village in Mizoram, where they worked on four construction projects to improve the lives of local villagers

Hyderabad, flies home after his two years in India, he will possess a wealth of experiences that he received from the Indian Air Force, and the Indian Air Force will have a much deeper appreciation of the USAF. His Indian counterpart in the U.S., Flight Lieutenant P.A. Shah, stationed with the 1st Flying Training Squadron at Columbus Air Force Base, Mississippi, will have similar stories from his three years in the U.S.

Indian and U.S. army civil affairs personnel also collaborated in community relations projects in Phainuam village in Mizoram during JCET Balance Iroquois 2003. The combined forces converted a hill footpath into a motorable road, leveled a soccer field, graded a community center park and



Balance Iroquois 2003 in progress

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The new age of combat, many believe, will require greater skills in special operations, as has been demonstrated in both Afghanistan and Iraq. The ball was set rolling with three Special Forces exercises in the past year, two in India and one in Guam.

Exchange of personnel adds a human element to the military relationship. When Captain Jason Brightman, USAF, an exchange flight instructor at the Indian Air Force Academy just outside of

built an open sports field adjoining an elementary school and bonded with the local community.

The exchanges have gone all the way to the top. All three Indian service chiefs visited the U.S. in 2002, with Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal S. Krishnaswamy attending the Global Air Chiefs' Conference in Washington D.C. in October 2003. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Myers visited India in July 2003 and the U.S. Army Chief visited in early 2003, while the Commander Pacific Command has visited India three times in the past few years. The Chief of Naval Operations visited India in October 2003 and Chief of Staff Air Force is scheduled to visit India sometime in 2004. Indian Chief of Army Staff General N.C. Vij visited the U.S. in March 2004.

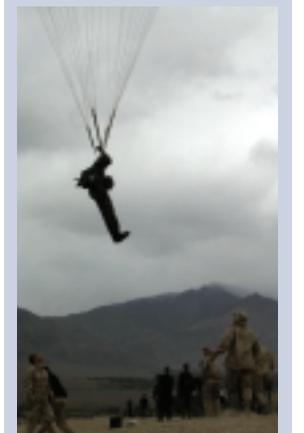
Another cornerstone of inter-operability is achieving a level of compatibility of equipment that enables one country to "talk" to another. The more the two countries exercise together, the greater the rationale to provide India with compatible equipment, communications and technologies. The Indian military establishment's desire to buy U.S. equipment through the FMS (foreign military sales) route and the U.S.'s willingness to sell state-of-the-art equipment to India are a happy convergence. Among the many motivations for supporting the U.S. sale of defense technology and equipment to India is the improving inter-operability between the two countries' forces. The new defense

JOINT EXERCISES

SEP-OCT 2002: Naval exercise Malabar, covering surface, sub-surface and air warfare over the Arabian Sea. Indian Navy's western fleet fielded the Delhi class destroyer comprising *INS Delhi*, Godavari-class frigate *INS Gomati* and Shishumar-class submarine *INS Shankul* and tanker *Aditya*, with the *USS Chancellorsville*, a Ticonderoga-class guided missile cruiser and *USS Paul F. Foster*, Spruance-class destroyer.

OCTOBER 2002: Cope India-02, an air mobility exercise to

COURTESY: PACOM



develop a baseline for inter-operability. USAF personnel aboard IL-76 and AN-32 observed Indian Air Force flight procedures and Indian Army paratroopers and heavy equipment being air dropped. Indian Air Force and Army personnel observed American procedures in such areas as use of drag parachutes and preparing drop zones. The Indian Air Force and Army learned to conduct airdrop operations from C-130 Hercules tactical airlift aircraft.

JOINT EXERCISES

SEPTEMBER 2003: U.S. and Indian special operations forces conducted a three-week joint exercise in high-altitude warfare in Leh.

OCTOBER 2003: Malabar, a complex exercise off the Kerala coast involving aircraft warships, submarines and P-3

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Orions. Exercise in new disciplines such as interception of suspect vessels.

FEBRUARY 2004: For the first time since 1963, 8 F-15C fighter aircraft from the 19th Fighter Squadron, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, and Indian Air Force Jaguar, MiG 21BISON, Mirage 2000, Su-30 K aircraft conducted dissimilar air combat training (DACT) with both air forces playing offensive and defensive roles in Cope India 2004 at IAF Station Gwalior.

MARCH 2004: U.S. and Indian soldiers held joint training exercises in Mizoram, at the Counter Insurgency Jungle Warfare Center (CIJW).

relationship also means that the past political disconnect that hampered American defense sales to India is a thing of the past. With the lifting of sanctions, only those major defense items on India's wish list valued over Rs 63 crore (\$14 million) require Congressional notice, putting India in the same category as key U.S. allies such as Japan and South Korea.

In 2002, the U.S. agreed to sell 12 AN-TPQ/37 Firefinder counter battery radars to the Indian Army. Two interim radars arrived in July 2003 and have been deployed in India. They are part of a Rs 855 crore (\$190 million) sales agreement under FMS. The mobile radar system uses a combination of radar techniques and computer functions to detect and accurately locate artillery and rocket weapons to permit rapid engagement with counter-fire. Operator and crew training for Indian Army personnel on these radar systems started in California in early 2003.



Monitoring a joint training session

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The second major deal under negotiation is for the P-3 Orion naval reconnaissance plane. This maritime aircraft is crucial for boosting the long-range surveillance capabilities of the Indian Navy. U.S. officials describe it as a "3C-plus" (i.e., the version that would be sold to India would be equipped with the latest avionics, including sensors and computerized command and control and weapons systems). Officials describe it as "a maritime patrol aircraft with offensive capability." India will also buy into the deep submersible rescue vessel system. Meanwhile, GE-404 engines for the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) have already made their way to India.

The U.S. has indicated its willingness to make Perry-class frigates available to the Indian Navy, as well as Sea Hawk helicopters. India will buy Rs 202 crore (\$29 million) worth of Special Operating Forces-unique equipment to enhance the counter-terrorism capabilities of its special forces. They may also purchase chemical and biological protection equipment. Indian special forces have tested much of this equipment during joint exercises and it stands to reason that joint operations will necessitate India possessing compatible equipment and technology.



Indian military personnel view the demonstration of a hand-held, U.S. GPS system

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Border management is a key area of concern for India's national security and India is interested in accessing complete border management systems. An Indian team visited the Sandia Laboratories in New Mexico to explore sensor systems used by the U.S. along the border with Mexico. The Indian Army is considering sending experts to Sandia, even as the U.S. is willing to sell customized sensors to address the different needs on India's Eastern and Western borders.

An important aspect of the defense relationship is what is known as its "spigot" (on-again-off-again) quality, which has led to Indian fears of the reliability of the U.S. as a defense partner both in cooperation and sales. To assuage this, U.S. Defense Undersecretary Douglas J. Feith maintains that the U.S. will not use defense relations to mark disagreements with allies such as India, "In a multidimensional relationship, with a deeply rooted appreciation of common strategic interests, it will be less likely that such sales will be a tool for dealing with differences." Former U.S. Ambassador to India Robert Blackwill put it more forcefully, "The U.S. will be a reliable provider of defense commodities to India because a strengthened, capable and effective Indian military is in America's national interest."

With the establishment of India's Integrated Defense Staff (IDS), the U.S. Joint Staff office has been sharing valuable information to assist the IDS in developing an Office of Net Assessment and an Indian national defense university. There have been two rounds of joint staff talks which have led to exchanges of ideas and planned visits of IDS personnel to U.S. institutions in order to cooperate on tri-service

JOINT DEFENSE COOPERATION

2002-2003: Three SOF exercises held in the JCET (joint combined exercise training) Iroquois series. Two exercises held in India and one in Guam. Other exercises include:

- Pacific Area Special Operations Conference (Feb 2003)
 - Small Unit Tactics, Para Drops (May 2002)
 - Close Quarter Combat (May 2002) Fort Lewis, Washington
 - Live Fire exercises (April 2003) India
 - Counter-terrorism (May 2003) India
 - Platoon exercise (June 2003) Guam
 - Close quarter combat (August 2003) Fort Lewis, Washington
- MAY-JULY 2003:** U.S. Military Academy exchange with IMA.

JUNE 2003: Army High Altitude medical subject matter expert exchange in Kashmir.

AUGUST 2003: Army Intelligence subject matter expert exchange in Goa. U.S. and Indian defense intelligence agencies met in 2002-03 and included an intelligence exchange conference in Washington D.C. in July 2003. The chief of India's new DIA traveled to the U.S. on counterpart visits to understand the workings of military intelligence at the national level.

Pacific Air Forces safety, security forces, medical officers, and logistics experts have begun a relationship with the IAF to help the latter improve readiness and safety programs.

USAF restarted its instructor pilot exchange program participation in India.

institutions and military planning. This is a crucial aspect of U.S.-India inter-operability, since U.S. forces mostly function under joint command, the most recent example being the U.S. action in Iraq. The Indian IDS has also been in dialogue with PACOM's Joint Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Combating Terrorism. Central to the transformation of this relationship is the ability to enable the three Indian services to achieve a compatible degree of jointness. The U.S. has proposed defense planning exchanges to assist the IDS in working out joint strategies from budgets and acquisitions, to command and control issues. This is the future of defense planning, where individual services are subsumed into an interdisciplinary system. Thus, a new relationship is being made between the Pentagon's key think tank, Office of Net Assessment and its Indian counterpart in order to bring together the defense research communities of both countries.

Similarly, a bilateral dialogue on a missile defense system is under way between the U.S. and India. Indian experts participated in a missile

Joint exercises set the basis for cooperation



PRAKASH SINGH / AFP PHOTO

defense exercise in Colorado in June 2002. Indian defense officials have traveled to the U.S. over the past two years to talk specifically about future involvement in missile defense programs. A missile defense workshop was conducted early in 2004 in New Delhi and India has been invited to attend the multilateral BMD conferences in Kyoto and Berlin and to observe the U.S. Roving Sands exercise in 2004.

Peacekeeping is an area where the Indian experience has many valuable lessons, as India is a veteran of numerous peacekeeping exercises under the United Nations. "Shantipath," a joint U.S.-Indian Army peacekeeping exercise, driven by the latest computer war-gaming simulation, was held at the United Services Institution in New Delhi in early 2003. It involved many regional countries and was the largest such exercise ever in South Asia. It has set the stage for future cooperation in this area, as the world moves rapidly toward multilateral peacekeeping or



USS Chancellorsville during the Malabar exercises off Kochi

BHASKAR PAUL / INDIA TODAY

peace-enforcement missions in trouble spots that may not be under the UN umbrella.

Military cooperation is also fanning out to include cooperation programs in regional HIV/AIDS prevention between the PACOM's Center of Excellence and the Indian military medical organization. An agreement signed in February 2004 on coordinating military research, the master information exchange agreement signed by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and former Minister of Defense Fernandes, was a watershed of sorts between the U.S. and India. Now both systems move to share research in areas as diverse as armaments and survival techniques in extreme conditions like Siachen. The next step is to get the military laboratories and technologies to "talk" to each other, a quantum leap in the evolution of the bilateral relationship.

The U.S.-India defense relationship has grown to a stage where the future is clear. It is one in which the two militaries can work in unison to combat the regional and global challenges of terrorism, administer peacekeeping and humanitarian action, keep the high seas safe for the movement of commerce and energy, take the lead in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and be a force for stability in Asia.

PEACEKEEPING BIDS

2002: Multilateral peacekeeping operations exercise in Bangladesh

FEBRUARY 2003: U.S.-India Army Peacekeeping CPX "Shantipath," driven by latest computer war-gaming simulation was held at United Services Institution, New Delhi. It involved the U.S., India and 11 other countries, with over 150 participants. The co-hosted exercise was designed to familiarize participants with techniques for conducting



peacekeeping operations in a multilateral environment. The exercise involved battalion staffs from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the U.S., and police and staff officers from Madagascar, Mauritius, Fiji, Mongolia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and Tonga.

Enhanced Peacekeeping:

- India received Rs 3.6 crore (\$800,000) in EIPC funds for the next five years on training and equipment, supporting U.S.-sponsored seminars.
- India to co-host U.S.-sponsored peacekeeping operations exercises and host Pacific Armies Management Seminar and MPAT TE-7.

AUGUST 2004: IDS to co-host PACOM's multilateral Platoon Augmentation Team 07 PKO CPX series in U.S.